

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Last Call for Home Canners

A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, September 2, 1937.

---ooOoo---

MR. SALISBURY:

Next coming up on our schedule here in Washington today is Ruth Van Deman, representing as usual the Bureau of Home Economics.

Ruth, if my memory serves me right, your last words when you signed off last Thursday were something about a round table today on home canning.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

That's right, Morse. As usual, you're 100 percent accurate.

MR. SALISBURY:

With about 20 percent error.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Oh no, Morse. I won't allow more than a one percent standard deviation on that. But we won't fuss. I need your cooperation 100 percent on this round table.

MR. SALISBURY:

O.K. I'm one of the world's best cooperators. I'll even raise you. I'll make it 200 percent. What's my job?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

You take this pile of letters.

MR. SALISBURY:

O.K.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Each one of those represents a woman with a home canning question. You fire the questions at me one by one.

MR. SALISBURY:

Are you sure you know all the answers, Ruth?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

I hope so. I've been down to the canning laboratory and fortified myself by a long talk with Mabel Stienbarger. By the way I found her with her sleeves rolled up canning tomatoes.

MR. SALISBURY:

Experimenting to find a new method?

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No. The directions for tomatoes in her bulletin seem to be perfectly satisfactory. At least "we haven't had any complaints." Of course you know Miss Stienbarger's bulletin?

MR. SALISBURY:

Yes I believe I could call name and number on that in my sleep, -- "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats," Farmers' Bulletin 1762.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Another 100 percent for you. Now I'd like to tell you about these tomatoes Miss Stienbarger is canning. They're for vitamin tests in the nutrition laboratory. We're trying to get more reliable data on the vitamin values of tomatoes canned by standard home methods.

MR. SALISBURY:

I suppose it will take quite a while to run those experiments.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Oh yes, it takes months to carry out a series of vitamin tests like that.

MR. SALISBURY:

But it's already an established fact, isn't it, that all canned tomatoes are a good source of certain vitamins?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, tomatoes, fresh or canned, are rich in vitamin A and vitamin C. But we want to find out just how much these vitamin values are affected by the method of canning. You know tomatoes have to be handled just right to keep the maximum amount of their vitamin C.

MR. SALISBURY:

Then they're bound to lose some vitamin C in the canning process.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, some. But even so canned tomatoes are one of the cheapest sources of vitamin C in the winter diet. With all this talk about loss of vitamin C, some people have got jittery and written us asking whether it was really worth while to can their tomatoes at home.

MR. SALISBURY:

And I take it you told them to steam right ahead. Save the maximum of vitamin C and forget about the little bit that was lost.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Most emphatically. We told them to can all the tomatoes they feel they have need for, if they have them fresh from the garden. When you have to buy tomatoes to put up at home, that's something else again. Then you need to figure costs very carefully, to see whether it pays. Of course you have to count in fuel, and containers, and time, as well as the price of the raw tomatoes.

But, Morse, I'm afraid we're off on a tangent, and aren't getting on with our round table very fast.

MR. SALISBURY:

Don't let that bother you, Ruth. At least we're on the subject. Which is more than can be said for many round tables I've sat in on. But I do think it's time to give our listeners a break. No. 1 question there is from somebody who wants to know about canning fruit without sugar.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

She's on a special diet I suppose.

MR. SALISBURY:

You've guessed it. Can she can fruit without sugar, is what she wants to know.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

She certainly can. And she can go about it in the usual way. That is, she can pack the fruit into the jars, but instead of filling them up with hot sugar sirup, she should use hot fruit juice. The fruit juice extracted from some of the riper fruit, gives a better flavor to fruit canned without sugar, and helps it hold its color and shape. Then she should put on the rubbers and jar tops and process the fruit in a boiling-water bath as the timetable specifies.

MR. SALISBURY:

Well, that takes care of that. Now, here's one about - - - canned peaches. Say, this is sad. Let me read it just as it's written: "All my jars of beautiful canned peaches are turning dark. What's wrong? Have I stored them in too warm a room?" What's the answer on that, Ruth?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

My guess would be that it's not the heat in the place where they're stored, it's the way she processed them. Does she say anything about that?

MR. SALISBURY:

Yes, she says they looked perfectly all right when she took them from the oven, "after cold packing and processing for 40 minutes in an oven heated to 250° F."

MISS VAN DEMAN:

I thought so. That's what often happens to peaches and pears after oven canning, especially if they've been packed into the jars without precooking. The fruit heats up very slowly, and the air and enzymes in the tissues act on the color pigments, and make the fruit turn brown. It's perfectly wholesome and all right to eat, but it doesn't look appetizing.

MR. SALISBURY:

Here's one that must be from the South. It's about sweetpotatoes and black-eyed peas. I didn't know they could be canned.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Oh yes, if you have a pressure cooker. But we don't recommend canning sweetpotatoes as a general thing. Sometimes there may be a lot that have been cut by the plow in harvesting. Or maybe storage facilities aren't right for keeping the potatoes "as is". Under such circumstances it may be economy to can sweetpotatoes.

MR. SALISBURY:

Do you just peel 'em and pack 'em into the cans?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

There's more to it than that. They have to be boiled or steamed first. Then peeled, and cut into sections, and packed hot. Then some salt goes in, a teaspoon to each quart, and enough boiling water to cover. Then, they need a good long processing in the steam pressure canner.

MR. SALISBURY:

How long is a "good long" processing?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Morse, I'm afraid you've got me there. I can't remember exactly. But the timetable in the canning bulletin gives it, for the different size containers. We'll have to send a copy of that to Mrs. South-of-the-Mason-and-Dixon Line.

MR. SALISBURY:

Good enough. Now, what about the black-eyed peas?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

They're like lima beans. We don't recommend canning them if they can be stored dry. But if for some reason somebody prefers to can black-eyed peas or lima beans, then they should be packed hot and processed in the steam pressure canner.

MR. SALISBURY:

Never in boiling water or the oven.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No never. Not if you want to keep them sweet, and sound, and safe to eat next winter.

MR. SALISBURY:

This being the height of the late tomato season, here's another one coming up on tomatoes. Before canning the tomatoes this person skinned them and left them standing overnight in a galvanized bucket.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Good gracious, Morse.

MR. SALISBURY:

What's wrong?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

I think we better send her a wire to throw out those canned tomatoes. Evidently that lady didn't realize galvanized iron has zinc in it. And the acid in tomatoes if they are allowed to stand in contact with galvanized iron will dissolve that coating and poison the tomatoes with zinc.

MR. SALISBURY:

That is bad. Well, I guess nothing's happened yet. She says she's holding the canned tomatoes until she hears from us.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Good. I'll send her a copy of the bulletin and underline that warning about galvanized iron.

MR. SALISBURY:

Here's one about corn. This lady wants to know whether to can it cream style or whole grain style, and also how to can corn on the cob.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Thumbs down on the latter. It isn't practical for home canners to try to can corn on the cob. The commercial plants can do it because they have the equipment and so on to pack it under vacuum. They've done a lot of experimenting to keep it from developing a cob flavor. And they use only certain varieties that have a very small cob. But it's ticklish business, canning corn on the cob.

MR. SALISBURY:

It's goodbye then to the corn-on-the-cob ambitions of that home canner. Tough luck. But the whole grain versus the cream style?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Whole grain style if she's using glass jars. It allows more circulation of liquid in the jars, and permits the heat to penetrate faster. Of course she's using a pressure canner.

MR. SALISBURY:

She doesn't say.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, it's to be hoped she is. Corn needs that high temperature to make it keep. All right. Next.

MR. SALISBURY:

This one is about canning chicken. This family likes a lot of fat with their canned chicken it seems, and this home canner wants to know if it's all right to leave the fat in the broth when she fills up the jars.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

She'll get a better product if she doesn't. Too much fat makes the chicken more difficult to process so it will keep. For that reason we don't recommend frying chicken before canning it. It seems to make the meat hard, and dry, and gives it a disagreeable flavor. No, Miss Stienbarger has found that it's best to trim off the excess fat from chicken before you can it. But leave the meat on the bone, and precook it in the oven or in water. Then pack it hot, and process under steam pressure.

MR. SALISBURY:

I suppose this is chicken canning time about now.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Generally in July and August. Whenever the surplus 2-year-old hens are culled out of the flock. They make better canned chicken than young cockerels. Well, Morse, I think we'll have to call it a day on this round table. Thank you for your 100 percent cooperation.

MR. SALISBURY:

Hmm, lost half of my cooperation already, Ruth. The pleasure's mine. Thank you for letting me hold the questions. And since this is the last call for home canners this summer I'll repeat the title of that bulletin - "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats."

~~#####~~